

Talk to a Printer vol. 1

We don't wear leather britches any more, but printers still use a vocabulary that draws on centuries of tradecraft. Despite our best intentions, talking shop with a printer can be confusing. This Service Note offers definitions you may find helpful.

Basis Weight- the weight in pounds of 500 sheets of paper cut to the basic size for that grade.

Bleed- printing that goes to the edge of the sheet after trimming.

Blueline- a printers proof for checking the accuracy of layout and position before printing plates are made. Now more commonly a DBL, digital blue line.

Brightness- the reflectance or brilliance of the paper.

Color bars- also color control bars, or proofing bars. Rows of color patches printed in the trim area used to control trapping, ink density, dot gain and print contrast.

Color separation- the process for preparing artwork, photos, or computer art for printing by separating into the four primary printing colors.

Cover Stock- also know as card stock, a heavyweight paper used when durability is a concern.

Crossover- printing across the gutter or from one page to the facing page of a publication.

Density- the degree of color or darkness of an image.

Dot- an element of a halftone.

Dot gain- the increase in dot size from the plate to the printed sheet.

Drawdown- a smear of ink on paper used to approve the colors before printing.

Dummy- a rough layout of a printed piece showing position and finished size.

Foil stamp- using a die to place a metallic or pigmented image on paper.

FTP- file transfer protocol, a method of sending electronic files from computer to computer.

Ghosting- a faint printed image that appears on a printed sheet where it was not intended.

Grain- the direction in which the paper fibers are oriented

Gripper edge- the leading edge of a sheet as it is pulled through the press.

Gripper- the metal fingers that hold the paper as it passes through a sheet press

Hickey- unplanned spots that appear in the printed image from dust or dried ink.

Highlight- the lightest area of a photograph. When produced by a halftone, it is the area that has the fewest and smallest dots.

Imposition- positioning printed pages so they will fold in the correct order.

Indicia- postal information placed on a printed product.

Kerning- to increase or decrease the spacing between letters to improve readability.

Knock out- to mask part of an image so it does not print

Makeready- all the activity required to prepare a press to print.

Moire- an undesirable pattern cause by incorrect halftone screen angles.

Mottle- a spotty or uneven appearance of printing, mostly in solid areas.

Perfect bind- a type of binding that glues the edge of sheets to a cover like a telephone book.

Perfecting- printing both sides of the paper in the same pass through the press.

Plate- a metal sheet that has a light or heat sensitive image layer. During the printing process the image area picks up ink,

PMS- an abbreviation for the Pantone Color Matching System, a system for identifying ink colors.

Point- for paper a unit of thickness equal to 1/1000 inch. For type, a unit equal to 1/72 inch.

Preflight- a process for analyzing digital files for output readiness.

Process colors- Cyan (process blue), Magenta (process red), Yellow, and Black, often abbreviated CMYK.

Register- to position print in the proper relation to the edge of the sheet and to other elements on the sheet.

Saddle stitch- binding a booklet with staples in the seam where it folds

Scoring- a crease applied in a straight line to a sheet to allow it to fold easier and more accurately.

Self-cover- using the same paper as the text for the cover.

Sheetwise- to print one side of a sheet with one plate, then turn the sheet over and print the other side with another plate using same gripper and opposite side guide.

Signature- a sheet of printed pages which when folded becomes part of a book.

Soft proof- a proof that is viewed on a monitor rather than on paper as a hard proof.

Stochastic- a screening process that converts images into very small dots of equal size and variable spacing.

Tack- the stickiness of ink required to adhere properly to the substrate. Too much tack can cause picking of fibers from the paper.

Trapping- the ability to print one ink over another.

UV coating- a liquid coating applied to the printed piece then bonded with ultraviolet light. The coating can provide gloss, texture and durability.

Varnish- a colorless ink applied to printed surfaces for looks or protection.

Web press- a press that prints a continuous roll of paper.

Wire side- in papermaking, the side of the paper next to the wire on the paper machine. The under side of the paper.

With the grain- folding or feeding paper into a machine parallel to the grain of the paper.

Work and tumble- one side is printed then the sheet is turned from front to rear so that the opposite end is used as the gripper edge when the second side is printed.

Work and turn- a printing method where one side of the sheet is printed, then the sheet is turned over so that the same gripper edge is used when the second side is printed.

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